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AUTHOR Lasonen, Johanna; And Others
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ABSTRACT

A study was conducted to determine Finnish vocational teachers' gender-role attitudes. It also identified the personal and professional variables that best explained the variance in gender-role attitudes. The sample consisted of 923 comprehensive vocational institute teachers from all major geographical areas of Finland; 92.3 percent returned a survey based on Osmond and Martin's (1975) Sex-Role Attitude Scale. Zero-order correlations and stepwise multiple regression conducted among personal and professional variables (gender, age, household income, teaching general subjects, and marital status) and the gender-role attitudes scale revealed that gender explained most of the variance in gender-role attitudes. The findings among Finnish vocational teachers paralleled those of U.S. studies. Male and older teachers with less education had more traditional gender-role attitudes than female and younger teachers. Teachers and administrators may need training in more gender-equitable teaching and in awareness of their nonverbal behavior; such training can contribute to less gender-biased schools. (Appendixes include 20 references and 4 data tables.) (Author/YLB)

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Finnish Comprehensive Vocational Institute
Teachers' Gender-Role Attitudes

Author:

Johanna Lasonen
University of Jyväskylä
Institute for Educational Research
Department of Research on Vocational Education
P.O. Box 35
40351 Jyväskylä, Finland
Telephone # 358-41-603307, FAX # 358-41-603201

Co-Authors:

Penny L. Burge & Curtis R. Finch
Division of Vocational and Technical Education
Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University
Blacksburg, Virginia 24061-0254
Telephone # 703-231-5377

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FINNISH COMPREHENSIVE VOCATIONAL INSTITUTE TEACHERS' GENDER-ROLE ATTITUDES

Abstract

The purposes of this study were (1) to determine Finnish vocational teachers' gender-role attitudes and (2) to determine what personal and professional variables best explain the variance of gender-role attitudes. The sample consisted of 923 comprehensive vocational institute teachers from all major geographical areas of Finland. Of 923 vocational teachers, 92.3% returned a survey based on Osmond and Martin's (1975) Sex-Role Attitude Scale. Zero-order correlations and stepwise multiple regression conducted among personal and professional variables and the gender-role attitudes scale revealed that gender explained most of the variance in gender-role attitudes ($R^2 = .275$). The combination of the variables gender, age, household income, teaching general subjects, and marital status, entering the final stepwise multiple regression equation in that order, resulted in a multiple correlation of .579 with the coefficient of determination .335 ($F = 92.297$; $df = 5,917$; $p > .001$). The study findings among Finnish vocational teachers parallel those of American studies. Male and older teachers with less education have more traditional gender-role attitudes than female and younger teachers. The findings of the study provide implications for teachers' preservice and in-service programs.

Introduction

Gender-role stereotyping is attributing simplified and rigid preconceptions of behaviors, abilities, interests, values and roles to a person or a group of persons on the bases of their sex (Basow, 1986). In socio-cultural approach, gender stereotypes are determined with a so called consensus definition: stereotypes are regarded as a part of human capital of a culture. Individuals are adjusted to human capital values through socialization. Stereotypes are norms and roles which justify and explain relationships between different groups (Ashmore & DelBoca, 1981).

Evans (1988) analyzed constructions and reconstructions of gender relations in education with the concept of gender agenda which she defined: "An agenda is formed of ideas, issues and problems flowing from previous practice which shapes engagement

with the immediate practice. Gender is one element of the continuous formation and reformation of the agenda (p. 7)". The schools involve personal, societal and collective gender agendas. Teachers and students have their personal gender agendas. Bureaucratic and legal arms of government affect school and personal lives through societal gender agendas. Collective gender agendas combine both personal and societal agendas which may be contradictory. This paper illustrates one aspect of personal gender agenda, teachers' gender-role attitudes, which are composed of the previous experiences and circumstances, and predominant collective gender agendas.

Gender-role attitude refers to a person's standpoint of the norms and expectations required for men and women according to their biological sex. Certain attitudes as beliefs of gender roles direct persons' frames of mind and habitual modes of regarding their conceptions of division of labour, work roles and counterparts' characters with different talents. Osmond and Martin (1975) defined modern gender roles to refer to flexible and dynamic transcendence of gender-role constraints. Traditional gender roles indicate those roles which are based on the roles of men versus women.

Statement of Problem

Traditional and gender-stereotyped conceptions of occupational roles have lead to gender stratification in worklife and education in terms of segregated division of labour, money earned, and mobility in professions (American Association of University Women, 1988; Basow, 1986). Attitudes guide people to adopt different vocational and other life roles. Teachers' and students' attitudes and behavior are related to each other through interaction (Harvey & Klein, 1985; Tarmo, 1990). Vocational educators' gender-role attitudes are significant in terms of their attitude transmission to students.

Researching gender and general education in Finland systematically started in the 1980s (Gordon, Lahelma & Tarmo, 1991). Some investigations with an educational perspective have been also conducted among vocational students by Huttunen (1978; 1981) and Räsänen (1988). The literature concerning vocational school teachers' gender-role attitudes reveals that little is known about Finnish vocational educators' gender-role attitudes and related factors. In the United States, this topic has been examined quite extensively (Burge, 1991). Burge and Cunningham (1982) have found that research in the area can help educators and administrators recognize gender stereotypes in education as they affect teaching and learning behavior. Schooling has the potential to change gender-role attitudes (Goodman, 1984). Reproduction of existing patterns of division of labour could be questioned consciously in schools.

Promoting gender equality might be regarded as an ethical side of education. Since 1960's international discussions in education have touched the complicated problem of social inequities maintained through schools. Social inequities, including gender issues, have been explained with liberal traditions, structuralist theories, and critical theories focused on cultural reproduction (Leach & Davis, 1990).

The goals of equity-promoting legislation will more likely be implemented by educators with modern and flexible gender-role attitudes. Therefore, it is important to determine gender-role attitudes of Finnish comprehensive vocational institute teachers. The purpose of this study was to describe to what extent variance in gender-role attitudes was accounted for by selected personal characteristic variables (gender, age, marital status, gender of children, and household income), and professional characteristic variables (occupational area, job roles, years of teaching experience, educational attainment, and parents' and spouses' occupational education).

Methods

The independent variables consisted of personal and professional characteristics. The dependent variable comprised gender-role attitudes. Data were collected via a questionnaire which included 14 demographic items and 36 gender-role attitude items that were adapted for use with the Finnish vocational teachers from Osmond and Martin's (1975) Sex-Role Attitude Scale (SRAS) and Eversole's (1977) items concerning gender roles in education. The study sample consisted of 923 Finnish vocational teachers selected from the 5463 comprehensive vocational institute teachers in Finland. The response rate was 98.7%. Correlations and stepwise multiple linear regression were utilized to analyze the data. Results of shrinkage computations showed the stability of the regression analyses in the sample.

Results

The vocational teachers of the sample came from all major geographical areas of Finland and consisted of a similar number of males ($n = 494$) and females ($n = 425$) who all spoke Finnish as their first language. Their ages ranged from 27 to 62 with most being in their forties. The sample represented 14 basic occupational branches of 25 available in Finnish vocational education.

Half of the vocational teachers taught in male-intensive occupational areas ($n = 464$) while only 2% of them taught in nonsex-intensive fields ($n = 18$). Female-intensive occupational areas were food processing, cosmetology, hair dressing, hotel

services and catering, general subjects, and garment trade ($n = 441$). Male-intensive occupations included the vocational areas of vehicles and transportation, printing, mechanical engineering, heat, water and ventilation, surface treatment, woodworking, construction, surveying, and electrical engineering. A nonsex-intensive teaching area was chemical engineering.

The majority of the teachers primarily taught vocational subjects with only 8.3% describing their major teaching responsibilities as general subjects. Respondents' teaching experience averaged 13.4 years. Their household incomes tended to be on an average, middle class range in Finland. More than three fourths of the respondents (73.2% married and 5.9% cohabiting) were couples, and 20.8% of them were single. Families averaged two to three children.

Occupational training level of the sample was determined as a basis of the amount of schooling ranging from one to seven. The mean of occupational training level for fathers was 2.04, for mothers 1.70, and for spouses 4.51. The respondents' mean of their occupational training level was 4.87 (for females 5.13, and males 4.65). College-standard-level occupational education was possessed by 24.4% and technician-level by 68.6% of the teachers.

The range of respondents' mean scores on the gender-role attitude scale was 1.11 to 3.17 from a possible range of 1 (modern attitude end) to 4 (traditional attitude end) among the vocational teachers of the sample. The mean scores and standard deviations for males and females presented in Table 1 have been arranged to indicate the range from most modern (lowest mean score) to most traditional (highest mean score) attitudes by items. The male respondents' mean was 2.11 ($n = 494$) and the females' mean was 1.74 ($n = 425$). The female vocational teachers held more modern gender-role attitudes on almost all items compared to their male counterparts.

Vocational teachers' gender explained most of the variance in gender-role attitudes ($R^2 = .275$). The combination of the variables gender, age, household income, teaching general subjects, and marital status, entering the final stepwise multiple regression equation in that order, resulted in a multiple correlation of .579 with the coefficient of determination .335 ($F = 92.297$; $df = 5, 917$; $p > .001$). Females, younger persons, those who taught general subjects and had higher educational attainments, those with fewer years of teaching experience, and whose mothers and spouses had higher occupational training levels held more modern gender-role attitudes than other groups in the sample. Teachers' gender had the greatest impact on gender-role attitudes compared to the other variables, with males holding more traditional attitudes than females. Age, marital status and teaching general subjects accounted for an additional six percent of the gender-role attitude variance. The variables in com-

bination explained one third of the total gender-role attitude variance. Correlations among the study variables are presented in Tables 2 and 3. The results of stepwise multiple regression are presented in Table 4. The sum score of the gender-role attitude scale was utilized in the computations.

Conclusions and Implications

The major finding identified by this research was that gender accounted for the greatest amount of variance in the gender-role attitudes of Finnish vocational teachers. Male teachers favored women's domestic roles but did not favor women in leadership and decision-making roles. Finnish vocational teachers' gender-role attitudes tended to parallel those of American vocational educators (Cunningham, Martin & Miller, 1982). Male vocational teachers followed the patterns associated with gender segregated division of labor, whereas females' perceptions of gender roles were more compatible with progressive equity legislation policies. Women might express more egalitarian gender-role attitudes compared to men in the hope of achieving equality in sharing the society's resources and household responsibilities, and in their career development. Women have been needed for the maintenance of an inexpensive labour force.

Knowledge about vocational teachers' gender-role attitudes can help vocational teacher educators to better recruit and prepare teachers who will train students for nontraditional occupations. According to national legislation and pilot studies on promoting gender-equity in Finland (Salonen, 1988), vocational school teachers' in-service training courses should include such content. Teachers and administrators might need retraining in more gender-equitable teaching and in the awareness of their nonverbal behavior that can contribute to less gender-biased schools and workplaces (Bayne & Robertson, 1989). Teachers' and peers' expectations for students in classrooms could be based on recognizing diversified individual talents and needs that students have rather than gender (Atkinson, 1983). Haataja, Lahelma and Saarnivaara (1989) emphasized importance of relieving students of stereotyped and unflexible gender roles at home and in work. Because teaching ethics include justice, students could be offered chances to become aware of men's and, especially, women's lives and values, and gender stratification in the course of history.

Processes of change could be started after realizing behavioral stereotypes. Teachers identified with most traditional gender-role attitudes might need more assistance in identifying the harm sexism creates for vocational students. Vocational teachers with modern attitudes could be candidates for leadership development as

gender-role attitude change agents.

Gender-role attitude change with its conscious and unconscious aspects is a complicated learning process. The problem of gender bias lies as well in changing attitudes as in removing the unconscious behaviors that might remain even after the attitude has been observed to change (Bayne & Robertson, 1989). According to Basow (1986) even faulty gender-role stereotypes tend to remain unchangeable, or they can be changed very slowly. Attaining gender-equality goals in vocational education has progressed quite slowly in Finland (Parviainen & Kyrö, 1990). To a great extent, students have made their gender-role choices before they enter to vocational institutions. Further, closely related occupational schooling and worklife tend to reproduce prevailing values, attitudes and patterns of division of labour. Positive motivation of teachers and teaching practice-oriented workshops might serve as sound ways to promote gender equity. Teachers should get opportunities to reflect on and evaluate their own attitudes by themselves.

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Table 1

Means and Standard Deviations for Males' (n = 494) and
Females' (n = 425) Responses to Sex-Role Attitude Items

Item	Females		Males	
	$\bar{x}$	s	$\bar{x}$	s
1. Equal Pay	1.11	0.35	1.58	0.59
2. Achieve through Husbands	1.15	0.46	1.63	0.67
3. Equal Job Opportunities	1.15	0.39	1.65	0.58
4. Men Free to Cook	1.25	0.45	1.69	0.63
5. Child Care Centers	1.36	0.57	1.67	0.69
6. Females Like to Be Males	1.34	0.50	1.73	0.57
7. Pampering Men	1.39	0.63	1.74	0.67
8. Woman Supervisor	1.36	0.53	1.86	0.72
9. Problems in Control	1.70	0.69	1.65	0.59
10. Same Jobs for Both Genders	1.47	0.55	1.88	0.66
11. Superiority of Genders	1.47	0.59	1.92	0.68
12. Men's Responsibility	1.53	0.62	1.93	0.73
13. Females Plan Career	1.54	0.59	1.94	0.55
14. Male Dominance Natural (36*)	1.57	0.60	1.96	0.66
15. Woman President (25)	1.46	0.63	2.09	0.92

Table continues

Table 1 (continued)

Means and Standard Deviations for Males' (n = 494) and
Females' (n = 425) Responses to Sex-Role Attitude Items

Item	Females		Males	
	$\bar{x}$	s	$\bar{x}$	s
16. Decision Making	1.48	0.65	2.09	0.74
17. Career Women Neurotic	1.51	0.60	2.13	0.70
18. Sex-Role Stereotypes	1.75	0.60	1.95	0.62
19. Husband Make Decisions	1.59	0.65	2.15	0.73
20. The Sex Equity Law	1.65	0.68	2.10	0.80
21. Enrollment	1.75	0.75	2.05	0.83
22. Male Liberation	1.79	0.67	2.06	0.70
23. Man's Self-Esteem Hurt	2.18	0.80	1.80	0.72
24. Female Sex Appeal	2.07	0.66	2.01	0.66
25. Male/Female Leadership	1.61	0.70	2.41	0.77
26. Genetic Make-Up (35*)	1.92	0.63	2.21	0.69
27. Career Interest (23*)	2.13	0.78	2.28	0.72
28. Females Like Dependency (30*)	2.03	0.71	2.48	0.67
29. Rational Discussion (28*)	1.92	0.72	2.59	0.73

Table continues

Table 1 (continued)

Means and Standard Deviations for Males' (n = 494) and
Females' (n = 425) Responses to Sex-Role Attitude Items

Item	Females		Males	
	$\bar{x}$	s	$\bar{x}$	s
30. Sex Ratio and Objectives	2.40	0.69	2.27	0.66
31. Learning Motivation	2.39	0.76	2.55	0.79
32. Primary School Children	2.22	0.83	2.77	0.86
33. Admission to Clubs/Lodges	2.39	0.81	2.66	0.82
34. Drastic Change in Equity	2.36	0.75	2.74	0.76
35. Battle between the Genders	2.57	0.73	2.62	0.66
36. Preschool Children	2.31	0.91	2.84	0.89

Table 2

Correlations between Personal Characteristics and
Sex-Role Attitude Scores (N = 923)

Personal Variable	n	r
Sex	919	.524 *
Age	866	.261 *
Marital Status	922	.057
Having Sons	923	.074
Having Daughters	923	.071
Household Income	914	-.064

* = $p < .001$

Table 3

Correlations between Professional Characteristics
and Sex-Role Attitude Scores (N = 923)

Professional Variable	n	r
General Education	920	-.277 *
Occupational Training	923	-.114 *
Fathers' Occupational Training	923	-.055
Mothers' Training	923	-.125 *
Spouses' Training	752	-.155 *
Male-Intensive Occupations	455	.513 * a)
Female-Intensive Occupations	354	-.372 * a)
Teaching Vocational Subjects	701	.111 * b)
Teaching General Subjects	76	-.202 * b)
Teaching Experience	906	.194 *

Note. a) The group of nonsex-intensive occupations differed from those of male- and female-intensive occupations (Hinkle & Oliver, 1986).

b) Teachers with leadership roles differed from those with teaching roles (Ibid, 1986).

* = $p < .001$

Table 4

Stepwise Multiple Regression Analysis between Personal
and Professional Variables and Sex-Role Attitude Scores
(N = 923)

Variables	Regression		Beta	
	Coefficients	SE	Weights	t-value
1. Sex	11.879	.683	.484	17.384 ***
2. Age	.290	.042	.190	6.898 ***
3. Household				
Income	-1.117	.232	-.158	-4.821 ***
4. Teaching				
General				
Subjects	-3.841	1.225	-.087	-3.137 **
5. Marital				
Status	1.948	.991	.065	1.966
(Constant)	42.914	2.388	-	17.969 ***

*** = $p < .001$

** = $p < .01$